



PASSAGES PRE-RELEASE CULINARY ARTS PRE-APPRENTICESHIP

"Second chances can be hard to come by, but for offenders at Passages Women's Pre-Release Center in Billings, a second chance may also turn into a career."

In the fall of 2010, Mark Maki, State Director of the Apprenticeship and Training Program, established the first ever "registered" Pre-Apprenticeship program at the Passages Women's Pre-Release Center in Billings. The Program was developed after several months of

collaborative efforts with State Senator Kim Gilliam, the Department of Corrections and staff from the Billings Job Service. At the time, pre-apprenticeship was a national concept that was loosely used and not defined for training programs that offered education and/or on-the-job experience that could lead into apprentice-able occupations. The Montana Apprenticeship and Training Program was the first in the nation to develop "registered pre-apprenticeship" which includes responsibility guidelines for the training entity, stated educational and on the job training requirements, a pre-apprenticeship agreement that is signed by all parties to the training program and a certificate of completion that recognizes the number of hours of training and education obtained by the apprentice. The completion certificate provides credibility that the training program adhered to the basic industrial training standards required by the occupation.



After reviewing and discussing several training options that could be used by the Pre-Release Center, Mr. Maki observed the dining/kitchen area at the Pre-Release Center and after some inquiry discovered that pre-release participants cooked over 1,000 meals a day, seven days a week from scratch for the Pre-Release and other inmates. After further inquiries, it was discovered that the Pre-Release Center utilized the kitchen facility for a training program for qualified inmates, who are mentored by three certified chefs,

work over 2,000 hours in the program and receive 288 hours in related instruction directly related to the occupation. The training program provides training and experience in baking, kitchen math, classic French sauces, meat cutting, etc., plus basic management skills for food service businesses. The Apprenticeship and Training Program and the Department of Labor and Industry recognized that the existing training program at Passages more than met industry standards in training for occupations in the food service industry beyond entry level. The certification from the Department is opening doors for employment at better wages and provides participants a second chance in life.

The Passages pre-apprenticeship program can train up to 15 inmates at time. Prior to application, inmates must have completed and passed multiple drug and alcohol assessments, personal counseling and educational requirements in order to qualify for the program. Once participants complete the program, they are required to obtain successful employment outside of the Pre-Release for a minimum of six months prior to release on parole. Although the program established at the Passages Women Center is titled a “pre-apprenticeship” training program and it does provide more than the necessary education and experience which would allow for entry into registered apprenticeship in multiple occupations, the primary intent of the program is secure employment.

The Pre-apprenticeship program has graduated 15 participants since October 2010. Of those 15, all are employed, 80% in the culinary industry, with starting wages ranging from \$9.00 to \$11.00 dollars per hour. This means that the participants are not starting at the bottom in the food industry at minimum wage. Also, only two of the 15 have returned to some form of incarceration, which is considerably below the average recidivism rate.



The Passages Pre-Apprenticeship Program was awarded recognition for innovation by the U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of Apprenticeship on August 1, 2012. Federal Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis awarded Passages Culinary Arts Manager Megan Jessee a certificate that nationally recognizes the Passage’s program as a leader and innovator of 21st century apprenticeship. The recognition ceremony was held in Washington DC in conjunction with the 75th anniversary of Registered Apprenticeship in the U.S.

Not to be outdone, the Montana Department of Labor and Industry and Passages Women Center held a Montana recognition ceremony on August 14th in Billings, Montana at the Women’s Center. Keith Kelly, Commissioner for the Department of Labor and Industry, and Mike Ferriter, Director with the Department of Corrections, spoke praises for the program and its tangible outcomes to a large group of Program participants, families, local employers and suppliers from the Billings area. The Department of Labor and Industry also provided the Women’s Center with an engraved glass trophy which recognizes their efforts in managing a program that provides employment, career opportunities and a second chance.